

**CAMBERWELL BEAUTY *NYMPHALIS ANTIOPA* L.  
(LEP.: NYMPHALIDAE): FIRST RECORDED BREEDING IN  
BRITAIN?**

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There are numerous references to the “fact” that there have been no breeding records of *Nymphalis antiopa* in Britain, recent instances (Bowles, 1996; Tunmore, 1996) presumably following the statement in Emmet and Heath (1989) that “*None of the earlier stages has been found in the wild in Britain*”. The prospect of butterflies from the 1995 migration emerging from hibernation and breeding stimulated considerable discussion. The possibility that spring migrants might supplement small numbers surviving hibernation (Plant, *antea*, 149-150) increases the likelihood of breeding in Britain.

There is already some evidence that *N. antiopa* may have bred in Britain. Butterfly records in *Notes or jottings about Aldeburgh* (Hele, 1870) were abstracted for *The Butterflies of Suffolk* (Mendel & Piotrowski, 1986) but only later did I realise that there was an updated 2nd edition (Hele, 1890) of this interesting book. I quote, *verbatim*, the relevant passage (p. 101) in this 2nd edition:-

*“Camberwell Beauty (v. antiopa) was found clinging to a post on the Aldeburgh Park estate, in 1876. It had just emerged, for the wings were limp, and partially expanded. These subsequently developed most perfectly. The specimen is in the possession of Mr. H. Wightman, of this town.”*

Nicholas Fenwick Hele (1859-1892) was a competent naturalist and carefully recorded the natural history of the Aldeburgh area of the Suffolk coast. He was respected by his peers and succeeding generations of Suffolk naturalists have found no reason to question his reputation.

**References**

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- Mendel, H. & Piotrowski, S.H., 1986. *The butterflies of Suffolk*. Ipswich: Suffolk Naturalists' Society.
- Tunmore, M., 1996. The 1995 Camberwell Beauty *Nymphalis antiopa* (L.) influx. *Atropos* 1: 2-5.